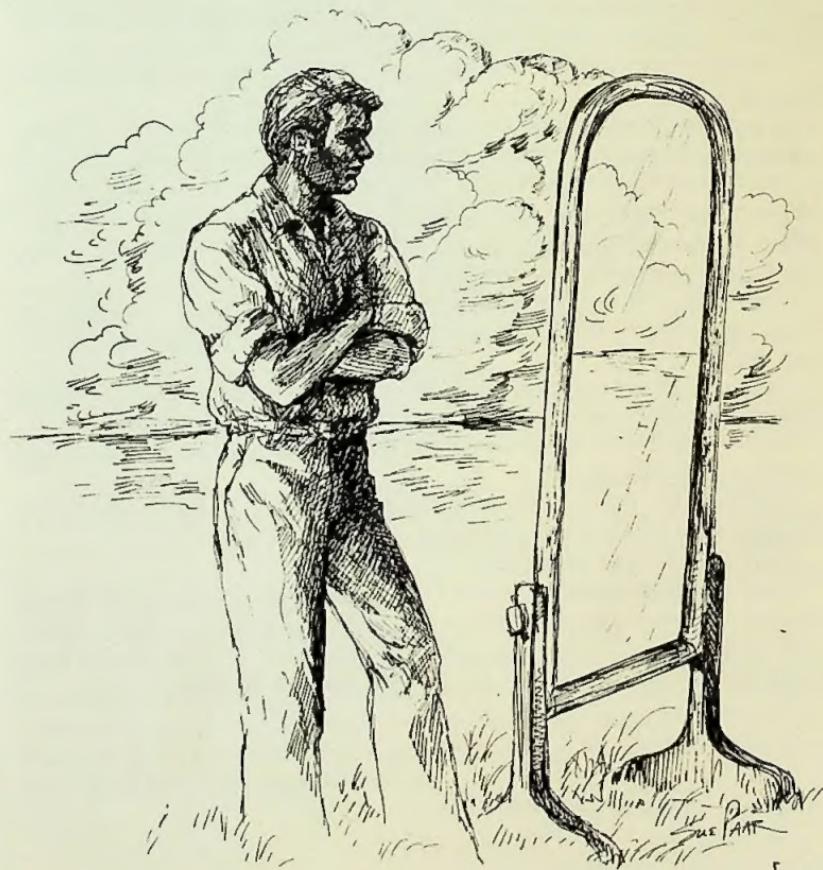


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**Creation
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QUARTERLY**



26 Jun '86

CREATION SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES SOCIETY

The Creation Social Science and Humanities Society (CSSHS) was incorporated in Wichita, Kansas, in 1977. The CSSHS is educational, and will promote and disseminate information on the implications of the Biblical creation model of origins for the social sciences and humanities, with emphasis on the development of these disciplines in accordance with the rapidly emerging and increasingly well established natural scientific models of Biblical creation.

The **Quarterly Journal** is directed toward teachers and students of the social sciences and humanities, especially in institutions of higher learning. The CSSHS may also publish books, monographs, and other writings, and sponsor speakers, seminars, and research projects related to its educational purpose.

IRS tax-exempt status was granted December 30, 1977. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Voting membership is initially by invitation of the Board of Directors of the CSSHS to candidates eligible on the following basis.

a. persons with at least a baccalaureate degree in the social sciences or humanities; or

b. persons 18 years old or over, who have held office in another creation-science organization with beliefs substantially identical with those contained in the CSSHS **Statement of Belief**, for at least one year immediately prior to applying for membership in the CSSHS; or who have a commitment to our belief and work clearly evidenced by their record of actual involvement. Voting membership dues are \$12 (foreign, \$13 U.S.) per year.

Sustaining membership is open to those who subscribe to the C.S.S.H.S. Statement of Belief. Sustaining membership dues are \$12 (foreign, \$13 U.S.) per year.

Both voting and sustaining memberships include subscription to the **CSSH Quarterly**, and are reckoned as beginning and ending in September.

Non-members may subscribe to the **CSSH Quarterly** at the rate of \$14 (foreign, \$15 U.S.) per year.

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Cover art by Mrs. E. Sue Paar

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers:

I was already a practicing psychologist when I became a Christian in the aftermath of a tragic automobile accident that claimed the life of my five-year-old son, Bryan, in 1972. In the light of I Corinthians 7:20's "each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him," I have continued in the profession, finding that God gives grace to confront whatever circumstances his calling entails. I love my place of calling.

From the time of my initial involvement in the biblical-creation ministry, I have viewed Genesis creation as a key focus for any successful attempt to bring psychology into captivity and obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5). My deepest prayer, both then and now, was born out of the work of such biblical creationists as Henry Morris, Duane Gish and Harold Slusher. I saw these men of God draw from the natural sciences clear, simple and easily understood evidences for the historical and scientific trustworthiness of the Bible. These men also showed how childlike faith in the straightforward testimony of Scripture provides a framework within which one can make sense of the otherwise bewildering confusion of natural science inquiry. I ask God, in the name of Jesus Christ, that the same two things might come to pass with regard to psychology and the social sciences.

Some twelve years have passed since my introduction to the creation-science ministry, and the question arises as to where the situation stands regarding the battle for psychology's redemption. I have two ideas on this question.

First, I remain convinced that any Christian psychologist attempting to conceptualize the discipline without a committed and explicit focus on biblical creation will end up with a product that is both bad Christianity and bad psychology.

Second, I believe that any spiritual blessing to be found in psychology will be found in small and simple things. Psychology will never fully understand human behavior, much less the mind and heart. Psychology will not end nor make a serious dent in such problems as human despair, crime, insanity and violence.

In small things, however, psychology can find its place of faithful service. The newest model cars, for example, have a tiny addition, a little red light in the rear window area. This little red light — the product of basic scientific research in human perception and attention — will save, in the course of time, thousands and thousands of lives.

For another example, certain categories of disturbed children are self-destructive to the point that they must literally be kept in straightjackets to prevent them from mutilating their own bodies. Knowledge gained from basic laboratory research in the psychology of learning has led to procedures which allow the safe removal of the straightjackets as well as some attainment of basic social and maintenance activities.

A Godly and biblically obedient psychology could have much to offer in the way of simple but concrete benefits to mankind, thereby making a contribution to fulfillment of the scriptural mandates to "subdue and have dominion" (Gen. 1:26) and to "love one another" (John 15:12).

Paul D. Ackerman

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Book by Dr. Ackerman Will Focus on Evidence for Recent Creation

A new book by CSSHS President Paul Ackerman will explain a wide variety of easily understood scientific evidences for recent creation. The book is entitled *It's A Young World After All: Exciting Evidences for Recent Creation*, and it will be published by Baker Book House. Look for this timely new creationist book in your local bookstore this summer.

Creation Conference in Pittsburgh will Focus on Evidence for a Young Earth

Readers of CSSHQ may wish to attend the International Conference on Creationism to be held on August 4-9 on the campus of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. The conference will focus on scientific evidences for a young earth, but other creationist topics will be presented as well. Dr. Ackerman will be there presenting two papers and promoting his new book. For registration, meals and housing details write to: International Conference on Creationism, PO Box 17578, Pittsburgh, PA 15235.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Dear Editor:

It was a pleasure to read Ellen Myers' commentary on the "positive thinking" movement (CSSH Quarterly VIII (3):6-12). Often the originators of these "movements" take a kernel of truth and very rapidly deviate from a sane Biblical position or from simple common sense. I agree with your remarks but would like to interject some thoughts on self-esteem or self-image.

What a person thinks of himself is indeed important. May I offer some observations on possible reasons why many Christians may be trapped into accepting many of the false ideas of "successful living" based on the concept of self-esteem. Since becoming a Christian I have been associated with nondenominational churches or fundamental Baptist churches as well as being exposed to chapel preaching in a Christian university. Many times the general drift from the pulpit is grossly negative. If a Christian has a reasonable self-esteem, it may come under attack by well-meaning clergy. Often preachers wish members of their congregations to perform certain positive acts, i.e., go soul winning, give more money, participate in more local church programs, etc., and in the process of "encouraging" members, often make them feel guilty, worthless and undedicated. Regardless of the motives of the pastor or chapel speaker he is tearing down a much-needed self-esteem in many Christians. Out of desperation possibly many believers may gladly accept "positive thinking" to counterbalance the stream of negative instruction and exposure to comparisons that are geared to belittle any modern Christian.

To me it seems that a Christian should have considerable self-esteem. Regardless of his acts before and after salvation, God considered him "worthy" enough to send His Son to die on the cross in his behalf. Is there not self-worth in such a concept? Christ died for me. If I never perform a single act of spiritual service, still God considered me worthy of His Son's sacrifice. I am **SOME-BODY** because God's Son died for me. Deity was willing to sacrifice Himself for something like me. If you wish, it is imputed self-esteem. Regardless of my standing in this life or my deeds (before and after salvation), God the Creator sees some worth in me in the sense that He was willing to die for me and wishes to have fellowship with me. This should develop considerable self-esteem (not pride) in a believer. It may be a far more effective tool of motivating Christians than guilt trips. Also it is a healthier form of positive thinking.

I hope that my thoughts on the subject did not become garbled in the prose. I always enjoy your articles. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Emmett L. Williams
5093 Williamsport Drive
Norcross, GA 30092

Mrs. Myers responds to Dr. Williams:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful letter of April 16. It was very instructive to me in that it explained why some — or, it seems, a considerable number of — Christians embrace the "positive thinking" movement. I am sure

you are right about the general drift from many fundamentalist pulpits being "grossly negative;" this goes for many radio and television ministries too. A dear friend of mine who is a dedicated, sacrificing believer frequently speaks to me of having endured "another whipping" at the hands of negative preachers. On occasion I feel the same way after receiving some Christian newsletters. The other day one of these made me totally forget for a moment that I am, and have been actively involved in the Right to Life movement since the early 1970s as it reprimanded the nation's "60 million born-again Christians" for their lack of action about the abortion holocaust!

I also fully agree with you about a Christian's proper, that is, imputed sense of self-worth because of what Christ did for us at the Cross. For that matter, our creation in God's own image and likeness (and even the responsibility and guilt we feel as sinners) is reason for awe at our intrinsic worth as the crown of His handiwork — Psalm 8. It is a sense of awe and joy, and part of our task as defenders of the creation foundation of all other doctrines is to uphold it.

The thrust of my article was not to diminish this awe and joy — but to oppose the rampant seduction of those who would teach that "faith" means to command God to do our will! We are being transformed into our Creator's and Redeemer's likeness by His great grace and goodness, not by our own "positive thinking." I do feel — and am sure you would agree — that there must be some exhortation against sloth among believers, as this is the burden of many of our Lord's own warnings. May He grant us all His own just and merciful timeliness in bearing His message — and me most at this moment and whenever I write!

Ellen Myers

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on your two recent articles in Vol. VIII, No. 3. Criticism of "christianized" positive thinking is long overdue (article on *Magic Self-Deification*). Your article on *Creative Forms* was good too. Was glad to see you don't go for the "some artistic forms are Satanic" mentality, for which there is no biblical basis. Too often artistic and musical forms are criticized just out of prejudice (they don't fit in with traditionally accepted forms), not because they can't be reconciled with aspects of God's revelation of Himself, and not because they can't be used to express the Gospel.

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Biblical Foundation for Professional Work in Psychology

Paul D. Ackerman

Productive and wholehearted labor is a key element in a life lived in moment-by-moment obedience to (1) the Holy Bible as God's inerrant word and revelation of Himself and (2) the leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ shed as a sin offering for the salvation of all men and women. As with all aspects of life, the field of chosen labor must be examined firstly in terms of its lawfulness in the light of scripture and secondly in the light of God's personal calling for each individual. The highest job-calling for each person is to labor in that biblically acceptable endeavor to which he or she has been personally called by God. The purpose of this writing is to state the biblical basis for the field of psychology as a lawful area of labor.

Proposition

God has provided biblical precedent for scientific study and research including the scientific study of man (psychology).

Biblical Foundation for Science in General

The foundational, historical event for scientific activity and investigation is revealed in Genesis 2:19 where it is written that God brought every "beast of the field, and every fowl of the air" to Adam to be named. On the basis of his observations of the actions and character of each kind of animal, Adam gave it an appropriate and meaningful name. Adam was brought into observational contact with each kind of animal in order to study and discern its nature and character. On the basis of this "research," a meaningful and appropriate name was given to the animal. Such careful, observational activity, directed at data existing in contact with a human observer in the present, is the most fundamental aspect of scientific inquiry.

Biblical Foundation for the Science of Psychology

The foundational, historical event for the science of psychology is found in Genesis 2:22-23, where the creation of the first woman, Eve, is described. It is written that God brought Eve to Adam. Upon seeing her and on the basis of his knowledge of the particulars of her creation, he called her "Woman, because she was taken out of Man." This historical event, performed in the presence of God, is the foundation for a biblical perspective on the science of psychology in that the same form of "research" activity which earlier had been directed at animals was now directed at Eve.

Proceeding from these foundational passages, one can find many scriptures having application to the conduct of science and psychology. Many of these pertain to the general wisdom and lawfulness of inquiry and research. (Examples would include Gen. 1:28, Prov. 6:6, Prov. 25:2, Eccles. 1:13, Eccles. 1:17,

and Lam. 3:40.) Other passages affirm that observations and consideration of the human scene can lead to meaningful psychological generalizations about human nature. (Examples would include Prov. 30:11-13, Eccles. 4:1, Eccles. 4:4, and Titus 1:12-13.) Finally, there are a number of passages showing that intimate knowledge of a person can yield insights into his or her character and personality. (Examples would include Matt. 16:18, and John 1:47-48.)

Therefore, on the basis of general biblical considerations and specific, relevant scriptural teachings, the following biblical framework for psychologists can be presented.

Biblical Framework for Psychologists

A. The Creation and the Conduct of Psychology

1. Whereas, man (male and female) is created in God's image (Gen. 1:26);
2. And Whereas, (a) "The Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts" (1 Chron. 28:9); (b) "I (Jesus) am he who searches hearts and minds" (Rev. 2:23); and (c) "The spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10);
3. Therefore, the scientific search into all things including the heart and spirit of man (psychology) is lawful and consistent with man's created identity.

B. The Fall and the Conduct of Psychology

1. Whereas, man disobeyed God and fell into sin, death and corruption (Gen. 2 and Romans 5:12);
2. And whereas, all human endeavors including the science of psychology are corrupted by the fall;
3. Therefore, as with all lawful activities and professions, those who engage in psychology must do so with great care. (Be very careful . . . how you live — not as unwise but as wise . . . because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16)).

C. The Cross and the Conduct of Psychology

1. Whereas, faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ provides salvation out of one's sins and into righteousness, freedom and abundant life (John 8:36; John 10:10; 1 Cor. 10:23; and 2 Cor. 1:20);
2. And whereas, this gospel of new life in Christ has relevant application to all areas of life including one's involvement in a biblically lawful profession — which psychology has been shown to be;
3. Therefore, one's sense of calling to psychology may be prayerfully considered in the light of Romans 14:13-23 which warns that "everything that does not come from faith is sin." Once entered into as a matter of faith, the conduct of one's work within the discipline of psychology — such work to be guided and constrained by biblical precepts — should be executed wholeheartedly and with diligence (Col. 3:23; Eph. 6:5-8).

D. The Coming of Christ and the Conduct of Psychology

1. Whereas, the Lord is coming soon. (Rev. 22:20);
2. And whereas, "the heavens will disappear with a roar," the elements "destroyed" and the earth "laid bare." (2 Peter 3:10);
3. Therefore, the Christian psychologist must keep his or her professional career in proper perspective relative to obligations to God, the family, the church, and the community. ("Live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." (1 Peter 1:17)).

E. The Great Commission and the Conduct of Psychology

1. Whereas, each individual has a debt of obligation to the whole world—not because God is indebted to the world—but because each of us in sins and trespasses has “suppressed the truth in unrighteousness” thus, in principle, damning the whole world by hindering the gospel;
2. And whereas, the highest of God’s commandments are to love Him and our neighbor, especially the saints;
3. Therefore, the conduct of the profession of psychology must be seen in the context of furthering the advance of the gospel and fulfilling the great commission. (Matt. 28:18-20) It is affirmed that all categories of lawful activity conducted in faith and obedience to the will of God vitally contribute to the advance of the gospel. Activities which produce a flowering of culture in the wake of the gospel are essential to its further advance. A godly, loving, and biblically obedient psychology would contribute to fulfilling the great commission.

Warning Note

At the present time the field of psychology contains many elements which are essentially and actively antibiblical and antichristian. The problem extends to many of psychology’s central objectives, methods, practices and concepts, often undermining central and fundamental components of the biblical world-view. Specifically, the spirit of contemporary psychology often seeks to deny:

1. The Deity of Christ and His atoning sacrifice for salvation from sin;
2. The authority and infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Holy Scriptures;
3. The creation by God of “the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exodus 20:11);
4. The nature of man as created in God’s image though fallen and sinful;
5. The dominant and overriding role of the biblical world-view in all counseling and therapy; and
6. The need for instilling within all cultures a strong sense of absolute moral standards based upon the Ten Commandments.

Students seeking to evaluate theories and concepts within psychology need to be aware of its many anti-biblical elements. The point to remember is that for the Christian the biblical framework constitutes a fixed frame of reference for the evaluation of theories, concepts and data. The biblical framework is not to be regarded as a system to be integrated and combined with other systems of psychological theorizing. Such mixing will inevitably result in both bad Christianity and bad psychology.

*Author’s note: The author is a practicing psychologist with a Ph.D. in social psychology. The above statement was submitted to the voting membership of CSSHS for review and comments. A number of suggestions and corrections were incorporated into the text, but responsibility for the views expressed remain with the author.

Why Secular Psychology Is Not Enough

William Kirk Kilpatrick

When we were younger we made up stories in our heads — daydreams. Needless to say, the heroes and heroines of these stories were always ourselves. The other day I was re-reading one of Flannery O'Connor's short stories in which the main character, a girl, daydreams about being a Christian thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. Quite to the surprise of the Romans, all of the lions lie down at her feet and lick her hand. Reading this triggered something in my mind, and I remembered that I used to have similar daydreams. But, of course, mine were the daydreams of a boy. My preference was to strangle the lions or rip their jaws apart. That would teach them to fool with Christians! The daydream didn't always end there. Sometimes the emperor would be foolish enough to send a dozen armed gladiators after me to do what the lions couldn't do. As a Christian I could not, of course, kill the gladiators. I merely disarmed them and knocked them out. After that, the emperor decided it was best to let all the Christians go free. Once, as I recall, one of these daydreams ended in the conversion of the entire Coliseum.

As we grow older, we tend to daydream less, but I'm not sure we ever get over wishing that our lives were more like stories and we more like heroes and heroines. Even grown ups still love stories of adventure and romance. And, surprisingly, even in this highly sophisticated and technological world, old-fashioned stories are still the proper favorites — stories in which there are elements of love and hate, good and evil, heroes and villains, and even the suggestion that there is some great force at work in the universe. That is why people flock to see *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*, *E.T.* and *The Emerald Forest*, *Return of the Jedi*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. People have a need for the stories. Without stories they become less human.

In this paper I am going to argue not only that we need stories in our lives, but also that our wishful instincts do not mislead us. A life is a story. That is the proper way to look at it. The best way to interpret and explain a life is in a narrative way. No other way will do.

But, of course, this is not the prevalent way of interpreting lives. The prevailing mindset is what Phillip Rieff calls the therapeutic mentality. Within the therapeutic framework, lives are explained in terms of theories or studies or observations. At best, a life amounts to a case history; at worst, we have, as Stanley Hauerwas would put it, the story that there is no story.

In what follows I want to make a case for a narrative interpretation of lives rather than a therapeutic interpretation. I want to suggest that secular psychology doesn't understand the storied nature of our lives and that Christian psychology had better not forget it.

Let me begin by addressing the question of meaning. The Old Testament prophet says "Without a vision the people perish." I do not think secular

psychology offers a meaningful vision. I am not sure that it offers any vision. Whatever it offers, it is not enough. People are not flourishing. They still swallow bottles of pills and hold revolvers to their heads just as people did in the Depression when they didn't know a tenth of the facts and theories we know today.

Why isn't secular psychology enough? It offers plausible explanations, good insights, good techniques. It offers very good pills. But it doesn't offer the one thing that people require most: a sense of meaning. Quite the contrary, we can even say that the psychological sciences tend to reduce meaning. One comes away from the psychology textbooks with the feeling that though life now seems more explainable, it somehow seems less meaningful. Everything we thought was a value gets explained away. Symphonies and paintings turn out to be sublimations of the sex drive or productions of the right brain hemisphere. Love turns out to be a matter of stimulus and response or a series of transactions conditioned by family patterns.

In thinking about love, for example, we are subtly encouraged to forget about Romeo and Juliet, and to think rather in terms of some new study of the sexual behavior of 2,000 couples in the Midwest, or some observations on the mating patterns of chimpanzees or to reorder our understanding along the lines of some such formula as "She is the mother that he always wished to possess."

And not only is the noble side of our nature reduced, so is the ignoble side. We are allowed to be neither saints nor sinners because, as it turns out, there is no sin; only synapses. I'm sure the day is not far off when some psychologically-minded committee of theologians will get together to rework the Lord's Prayer along more scientific lines. The new version will no doubt read "Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our synapses as we forgive those who synapse against us . . . "

What I am suggesting here is that though the social sciences are long on analysis they are very short on meaning. Tom Howard handles this matter nicely in his book *Chance or the Dance?* "The myth sovereign in the old age," he writes, "was that everything means everything" That is, everything pointed to something of vast significance standing behind it. But, he observes, "The myth sovereign in the new is that nothing *means* anything." Howard continues: "the old myth said, 'I have a father, and this is to be expected since there is, in fact, a Father who has set things up so that I will have some way of grasping this notion of fatherhood which is the stuff of things . . .' The new myth says, 'You have projected your experience of your father onto the cosmos, so that the Father exists strictly as the extension of your own situation.'"

The upshot of our continual exposure to the new myth is the complete frustration of the human imagination, since the imagination is forever asking for significance, and it is forever being told by the keepers of the new myth not to ask that question. Let me quote once more from *Chance or the Dance?* This time it's the imagination that is speaking: "Well, if *this* doesn't mean anything then (the imagination replies), does *this*? No? Well then, let's look over here. What about this? No? Well, here then? No again? Alas, the world is weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable."

I think we may be close here to the reason why the rise of psychology has not ushered in the reign of happiness. Try as it might to give us skills for living, psychology has never been able to give a reason for living. It offers no vision

And, as I have suggested, the reductionist nature of so much psychology often has the unintended effect of making life seem less important, less significant, less worth the struggle. Let me give an example. In one of his books, Victor Frankl quotes a psychoanalyst to the effect that values "are nothing but defense mechanisms, reaction formations, or rationalizations of instinctual drives." Maybe so, replies Frankl, but in that case one would have to be a damn fool to care much about values. He writes, "I would not be willing to live for the sake of my 'defense mechanisms' much less to die for the sake of my 'reaction formations.'"

Frankl's point is that psychology can assign no significant meaning to human values or, for that matter, to any human activities. Everything is explained in terms of the lowest common denominator; everything that first appeared to carry meaning is explained away. Consequently, within its own terms, psychology has little to offer in the way of motivation. Why should we work on improving our lives? When you boil it down, the only answer that mechanistic and physiological models of psychology can offer is something in the order of "Do it for the sake of your synapses" or "You have a duty to your neurotransmitters." Well maybe, but to paraphrase Frankl, I'm not sure I want to live for the sake of my neurotransmitters. Even the much-touted motivation of self-actualization won't do the trick. It may work for a while, but in the long run people yearn for a meaning outside themselves. Sooner or later (and it may be sooner for highly perceptive and sensitive adolescents) people ask, "What's the point of becoming a self-actualized person in a meaningless world?"

Now admittedly, some secular therapists do employ higher aspirations and more noble considerations in trying to motivate their clients. They say things like: "You have so much to contribute" or "Have you thought about the effect this will have on your parents?" or "I know you don't care about your own life anymore, Mrs. Jones, but can't you see how much your family needs you?" and so on.

I would only point out that when they say these things they are usually stepping outside of the limits of the psychological sciences and are making use of other traditions and belief systems. Where do these ideas come from? Where do we get the idea that individuals ought to put their families first, or that they ought to contribute to society, or that they ought to care how other people feel? Why should people love one another, or go out of their way, or act in any but purely utilitarian ways? These ideas did not originate in psychology.

Christopher Dawson once wrote, "As liberalism did not create moral ideas, so too it cannot preserve them. It lives off the spiritual capital that it inherited from Christian civilization . . ." I think secular psychology is in an analogous position. It assumes in its clientele a fund of good will, love, and caring that it is incapable of creating. We can go further and say that it assumes the existence of meaning systems which give order and purpose to people's lives but does nothing to sustain or preserve those meaning systems. It depends on those meaning systems at the same time that it is doing much to undermine and weaken those systems. In short, it is like a man sawing off the branch on which he sits.

Now, so far, my contention has been that secular psychology can assign no particular meaning to emotional distress and traumatic situations. It has no

ultimate answer to the question that plagues us when we are distressed and broken by the circumstances of life. That question is: "Why me?" "Why is this happening to me?"

Secular psychology can only answer that question in one of two ways. It can answer that your suffering is pure chance, randomness, the result of a bad concatenation of genes or chemicals, family patterns, or environment. Or it can answer like the friends of Job and tell you in very subtle ways that perhaps you really brought this on your own head. If you had only done this or if you hadn't done that; if you had only had a better understanding of family dynamics; if you had only given your children more freedom, or if you had only given them less. And so on. But such explanations, though they may be plausible, and though they may actually fit the facts of our lives, seem insufficient. They are explanations, but they are not meaningful explanations. They don't answer the question, "Why me?" For we may be well aware of others — friends, neighbors, relatives — who are perhaps less caring and more self-absorbed and who, nevertheless, go sailing through life. Why not them? Why me?

Moreover, the kind of explanations we get very often serve to trivialize our lives. Our struggles, sufferings, and triumphs when placed in the cool light of therapeutic analysis are made to seem much less significant than we feel them to be. And there's the rub. We are forever searching for significance in our life and we are restless till we find it. To be told by a well-meaning therapist that the particular problem we suffer from is a typical reaction of mid-life or that this particular family situation is "something we see quite often in the people we work with" — that kind of response just doesn't seem to do justice to the story of our lives.

The fact is we do look upon our lives as stories. However difficult to elucidate, we feel there is something like a point or purpose or plot to life. We are even audacious enough to want the story to have a nice *sensible* plot, preferably like a 19th-century novel. We decidedly do not want to think of our life as "a tale told by an idiot . . . signifying nothing" — although that seems to be the interpretation favored by the social sciences. This concept of life as story helps to explain why we like to tell stories, listen to stories, and read stories. As G.K. Chesterton put it, all life is an allegory and we can understand it only in parable.

I, for one, take that very seriously. I believe that if you are not looking at life poetically and dramatically then you are not looking at it properly. And this, it seems to me, is also the way Christianity instructs us to look at life. After all, Christianity has come to us as a story, not as a theory or a philosophy or a science. Or perhaps we might say that it is many stories that are part of one vast tale. There is the story of Creation, the story of Abraham, the story of Joseph and his brothers, the story of King David, the story of the Good Samaritan, the Christmas story, the Gospel stories. Moreover, we speak of God as the author of Creation and the author of our Salvation, and sometimes we refer to the drama of Salvation and the part we are meant to play in it.

It is a story of God's goodness but, since it is a true story, it is not a idyllic fable. The Dark Lord plays his part as does the Good Lord. A good story will not exclude the unpleasant side of life. The characters will encounter humiliations, accidents, misfortunes, and sorrows but these calamities serve a purpose and are never without meaning. Indeed the calamity is very often the occasion for the growth or transformation of the story's protagonist. For example, in one of

Tolstoy's short stories, a mortal sickness causes Ivan Illych to see his life as he has never seen it before. In Jane Austen's *Persuasion* Louisa Musgrove is transformed into a better person by an accident and her subsequent convalescence. In *Great Expectations*, Pip is transformed by his illness. In *Captains Courageous*, a fall overboard transforms a spoiled child into a loyal friend. And, of course, in the Gospel story, we find that it is through suffering that we are redeemed and the world is saved.

In stories, and particularly in the Gospel story, hardships, setbacks, persecutions, rejection, sickness, and abandonment are not mere random events. They can be occasions of *revelation*, of seeing something for the first time or remembering something that had been forgotten. And they can be an occasion of *transformation*, of turning lives around or turning them back to the right path. And the interesting thing is that the events in a story may serve not only as occasions of revelation and transformation for the actors in a story but also for readers and hearers of the story as well. Augustine takes and reads and the pattern of his life is revealed to him, and perhaps a thousand years later another man picks up the *Confessions* and the miracle is repeated. And it still happens. Despite the spirit of the age, we feel there must be a point to our lives. One of the great services which a story may render then is to help us see what that point may be. Stories may help us to recognize a moral or spiritual meaning in a personal situation that might otherwise seem chaotic or pointless.

Now I'm not saying that the significance of events is always crystal clear either to the characters in a story or to the hearers or readers of a story. There is always much that cannot be articulated, much that remains mysterious. There is indeed a sense in which all good stories are mystery stories. And that's because good stories are true to life and life is mysterious. You get the sense in reading Dickens or Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky that they are not only propounding the great and solid facts of life but also the marvelous and uncanny nature of those facts, and the mysterious bonds that connect facts and events and people together. But to say that the events in a story or in a life are mysterious is not to say they are random or senseless. Mystery and meaning are not opposites. Rather, a mystery is something that has more meaning than we can comprehend.

The problems we encounter in life, however, do not usually follow from a sense that there is too much mystery or too much meaning in our lives but a complete absence of both. We can sometimes reach a point where we feel not only that life is meaningless but also that there seems nothing mysterious about the fact. We look at life clearly and unsentimentally (so we tell ourselves) and it seems quite obvious that it is meant to be meaningless; and as soon as we can get up the courage we will exit stage left and put up with it no more. With David Copperfield, we all set out to see whether we will turn out to be the hero of our own story. Along the way, however, some of us come to the conclusion that not only are we not the hero, but that there is no story. I have suggested that secular psychology unwittingly encourages that bleak view. Let me suggest now that one of the tasks of Christian psychology is to challenge the notion that there is no story.

But first, lest you think I've been reading too many stories and not paying enough attention to non-literary views of human nature, let me add that this

view of life as story corresponds to some of the very best thought in contemporary psychology and philosophy. For example, the developmental scheme worked out by Erik Erikson is quite compatible with this view. For Erikson, the major element in ego identity is a sense of *continuity* over time. A healthy self, like a novel, requires a theme or narrative thread, and though this narrative thread may not tie up all the loose ends of one's life, it still ought to give us a conviction that our life ties together.

In the field of philosophy one of the most important books in recent years is Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. Much of this book is devoted to the problem of defining personal identity. Although I can't do justice here to MacIntyre's full argument, I can give a rough summary. The best way to understand a person's life, says MacIntyre, is to think of it as a story. Not as being *like* a story but *as* a story. He writes: "All attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative intelligibility, and accountability are bound to fail." Elsewhere he writes, "The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest." And again, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"

MacIntyre also notes that "When someone complains — as do some of those who attempt or commit suicide — that his or her life is meaningless he or she is often and perhaps characteristically complaining that the narrative of their life has become unintelligible to them, that it lacks any point, any movement toward a climax or *telos*. Hence the point of doing any one thing rather than another at crucial junctures in their lives seems to such a person to have been lost."

When a man comes to the point in his life when he begins to ask "What's the use?" or "What's the point?" or "What does it matter?" it's a sign that he has lost the narrative thread of his life. One of the major tasks of Christian psychology is to help him find it again. Christian psychologists are in a much better position to do this than their secular counterparts because they are in touch with a tradition in which every individual life, no matter how desperate and seemingly pointless, can find a place. Christian psychology can encourage people to see their lives as stories within a larger story, to locate themselves within a tradition of people who have been similarly tested. Many life experiences which appear meaningless or accidental from secular perspectives are more properly viewed as points of testing or revelation or transformation from the perspective of the Christian drama. Christian psychology has the task of helping us go beyond the level of merely "working on our problems" or seeing our lives as clinical studies, and on to the level of discerning the distinctive part we are meant to play and the importance of playing it well.

In all of this the role of faith is crucial. So too is the role of imagination. The distressed person needs the power to imagine an interpretation other than the bleak one he has assigned to his life. In the words of the old hymn he must be able to say, "I was blind, but now I see." "I looked at life that way, but I was wrong. Now I see it this way." The imagination needs to be fed, of course. And it feeds, naturally enough, on images. What kind of images? Well, it will try to nourish itself with whatever images are available. But I would suggest the kind of images the dispirited man needs are not clinical images or psychological images or sociological images but images that will give him back his spirit.

Inspirational images, if you will.

Now, I'm afraid the word "inspirational" has fallen on bad times, and has come to mean a sort of spiritual pep talk, as though the Holy Spirit were some variation on college spirit or team spirit. That view is a bit superficial. We'd do better perhaps to think of a commander rallying his soldiers at the darkest hour of battle, or of a family facing hard times, or natural disasters, or a serious illness with the attitude, "We've seen this before, we'll come through it again, we'll sustain each other with our love." Better yet is to look at the actual images of our Faith: images which say "God is with us, He will see us through."

What are some of these images, and how might they relate to the lives of those who seek help in counseling? Well, to someone who feels abandoned, desolate, without friends, it is no little thing to call forth the image of Christ in the Garden or on the cross. He, too, felt abandoned. To someone who is ashamed of his life but feels it is too late to start over, it makes a difference to know that Peter was a coward, Paul an accomplice to murder, and Augustine a libertine. When family life seems to have lost its point, when children seem only an occasion for heartbreak, it makes a difference to know that God, too, experienced the disobedience of his first children; and it helps to know that prodigal sons and daughters do come back. When someone's life seems to have been reduced to simply waiting and hoping year after year, it makes a difference to recall that the Israelites wandered for forty years, or that Monica, Augustine's mother, waited thirty years for an answer to her prayers. And finally, when someone can find no earthly explanation for his tribulations it is no little thing to recall that we battle with principalities and powers, that we have an enemy who goes about seeking our destruction, and that in our sufferings we may help to destroy the power of the Dark Lord.

Does a narrative approach to understanding human lives explain everything? No. After all, mysteries are at the heart of our faith. And ordinary people are also mysteries. Christians are not called upon to understand everything but to believe and act. The power of narrative, however, is not limited to the power to explain. It also has the power to sustain. It can sustain us even when it does not explain everything. It sustains us by assuring us that we are part of something important even though the connections are not always visible. God does have a plan for each of us. Our gestures and struggles which may appear to lead nowhere or to bear no fruit may yet have great significance. As Christians we really do believe that there are other lines of connections than those the world sees, lines which may run in completely different directions. The logic of stories and of lives, then, is not the same as the logic of the logicians.

Nor is it the same as the logic of the social scientists. The logic of the social sciences can be characterized as a cause-and-effect logic: this happened, therefore this happened next. It's a kind of rough mathematics of the psyche. Multiply three psychological factors by three environmental factors, and it works out to a psycho-social total of nine. For example, one prominent psychologist, in explaining the behavior of would-be assassin John Hinckley, points out that John's older brother and sister had preempted all the positive identities held out as valuable by his parents. "Consequently," the psychologists reasoned, "John adopted a negative identity — one of extremism, loneliness and social disruption — the negative of what his parents valued."

Now this is a plausible application of the concept of "negative identity" and it happens to fit the facts of "the case" very nicely. It is a logical explanation, although I can't imagine that for the Hinckley family it is a comforting explanation or a sustaining one. Somehow, it doesn't answer the question "Why me?" And I'm not even sure it's good mathematics. It seems to be one of those cases where three times three equals nine hundred ninety-nine instead of nine. To let the prominent psychologist off the hook, let me confess that in my own courses on psychology I have used the Hinckley example to illustrate the formation of a negative identity. I also offer neat and plausible psycho-social explanations of the reasons why some young people join cults, and some motorcycle gangs, and why some take drugs, and some take their lives. But I'm always conscious in doing so that these explanations are not nearly sufficient. And I know in my own case, when trouble strikes my life, such formulations seem beside the point.

I'm not saying that there is not an order to our lives or that there is not a coherence by which *that* connects with *this*. I would only suggest that this order is in a different order from what the social scientist supposes. It is better understood as a narrative order than a cause-and-effect order. The parts of our life story are not connected in a logical way but in a narrative way. In his book, *Vision and Character*, Craig Dykstra, in trying to characterize the progress of both lives and stories puts it this way: "What happens next cannot be deduced from what happened first, though what happens next must follow narratively from what happened first." To illustrate what he means, pick up a literary classic with which you're unfamiliar, read a few chapters, and try to figure out what will happen next. Reading *War and Peace* who could guess that Natasha would suddenly break off her engagement with Prince Andrew, and attempt to run off with the playboy Anatole Kuragin? Reading *Anna Karenina* who could guess that Alexey Karenin, the classic case of a mechanical man, would suddenly undergo an emotional conversion? Or that Vronsky would attempt to kill himself? Yet these things do happen. And when they do happen they seem like an inevitable part of the story. But these events proceed by a pattern which simply transcends the logic of cause-and-effect.

In this connection, it is worth noting that when social scientists get hold of great literature, or when literary critics employ a narrow social science analysis, the results are far from happy. Before we too readily adopt the social science explanation of lives we might consider what a failure the social science interpretation of literature has been. Even a naive reader realizes there is more at work in *David Copperfield* than sociology, more at work in *The Brothers Karamazov* than psychology, more at work in *War and Peace* than Tolstoy's sex life, and more at work in *Pride and Prejudice* than proto-feminism. Such attempts at narrow analysis always end up as petty endeavors next to the thing they pretend to analyze. The characters and events in Tolstoy, Dickens, Homer and Shakespeare cannot be reduced to social science categories. They transcend such categories. And just as psychological criticism misses much of the significance of literature, psychological analysis can miss much of the significance of individual lives.

Again, it is a question of imagination. A human life can be imagined in strikingly different ways from different perspectives. Imagine, if you will, a game of connect-the-dots, the kind of game children play. Only this time, imagine that the dots are arranged in such a way that more than one picture

can be formed from them. One person will connect them this way, another person that way depending perhaps on how they have been trained to look at things. Secular psychology will tend to connect the dots of our lives along certain lines and not others. They can make a picture, it is true, but you have to wonder if it's the right picture. Now take it a step further and imagine a three dimensional game of connect-the-dots — a game where some of the most important dots to be connected may be completely missed by players who are conditioned to think only in terms of two dimensions.

Or think of that other children's game in which you look for a hidden picture, perhaps a face in a tree. If you look at it one way all you see is the tree, but if you change your perspective in the right way it becomes apparent that the face was there all along.

Most introductory texts in psychology contain illustrations of such perceptual reversals. The idea seems to hold a certain fascination for secular psychologists. But they stop short of making the logical application to their own field. For it implies, of course, that there are other ways of looking at life than those employed by secular psychology. Christian psychologists, on the other hand, are in the fortunate position of looking at life's vagaries in a dual perspective. They can see both the tree *and* the face. The Face was there all along, of course. The picture has never made sense without it.

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Lucifer

Mary Tenbrink

Grey, colorless world
Approaching global afflictions,
trampled Holy ground
disowned tribulation
author of waste.
Wretched are we
too blind to see.

Mary Tenbrink receives her mail at 2021 N. Old Manor, #303, Wichita, Kansas 67208.

God's Invisible Yet Clearly Seen Reality

Paul D. Ackerman

In the beginning God created such basic categories as the heavens, earth, light, stars, plants, animals and man in his own image. (Gen. 1) Among the categories of animals were birds, fish, "beasts of the field," etc. These forms are examples of the distinct, basic kinds of God's creation by His word. They are *real* in the sense that God specifically intended them and created them. A plant is not an animal, a bird is not a fish, and so forth. The truth of this is attested to by everyday experience, and the average person takes the reality of these and other created kinds for granted. Not so, the worldly wise. For them, a real crisis of faith regarding the reality of basic categories has accompanied the journey into the "age of analysis."

The modern loss of faith in the reality of categories has many roots. The central cause is rejection of the ultimate identity, "I am that I am", the creator God of the Bible. Purposeful creation is the wellspring for genuine category and identity. Having rejected God and thus His creation of categories, modern man — now become his own god — has sought to establish for himself the reality of categories by using the powers of reason and observation.

But reason, during the age of philosophy, failed to establish the certainty of categories, and, now, in the age of scientific observation and analysis, the problem has only deepened, for insofar as our finely crafted instruments are able to discern, the boundary area between apparent categories is not sharply defined, but, rather, "fuzzy." Between the "black" of one category (plants, for example) and the "white" of another category (animals, for example), there is an area of grey (life forms having characteristics of both plants and animals and not easily assigned to either category).

The apparent absence of clear-cut and absolutely definable demarcations has struck the worldly intellectual mind as being extremely significant. Indeed the whole "modern" evolutionist world-view of reality is shaped by it, for the essence of the evolutionist world-view is to make the unreality of categories the one absolute. The whole of time, space and matter is seen as one cosmic flux. As we will see, however, this belief that there are absolutely no absolutes — the certainty of uncertainty — is a delusion. Evolutionist monism is not a discovery but a judgment from God. In order to see why, let us again trace, in more detail, the historical steps of descent into relativism and skepticism.

Faith in God as the creator of kinds and categories was abandoned. No longer trusting in revealed categories, man sought to discern for himself the demarcations of reality using the power of reason. The age of philosophy was born. In due time the judgment of God caught up with man's rebellion, and reason and philosophy failed as a means of establishing a sound basis for reality. Firm categories and boundaries could not be defined by the philosophers.

Instead of returning to God in repentance, man turned, instead, to the

scientific method of empirical observation and testing. The scientific age of analysis was born. But scientific investigation and analysis have only served to deepen God's judgment. Reality is more lost to us than ever. For example, the categories "plant" and "animal" seem quite solid, yet scientific investigation has turned-up strange instances which defy classification. Are there two categories, or really only one? Perhaps there is only *one* category of "*living things*" as distinct from non-life. But, then, there is the hazy boundary area between life and non-life. Should viruses, for example, be classified as living or non-living? There are proponents of both points of view. The dilemma is monstrous. Do all dichotomies, classifications, and distinctions disappear under the microscope of scientific, empirical investigation? Does life blend into death dissolving the distinction? What about love and hate? Truth and falsehood? Beauty and ugliness? Good and evil? The judgement of God hangs heavy on the twentieth century mind.¹

Scriptural Perspective

In contrast to this hellish state of doubt and uncertainty, Scripture asserts the promise of certainty not only in spiritual and personal matters relating to salvation, but for the physical and material realm as well. A key passage in this regard is Romans 1:18-20:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Consider the problem of category reality in the light of this passage. Part of the truth about God, known from the creation, is that He created distinct categories of, for instance, plant and animal. The reality of this dichotomy is manifest *in us* and has been *showed to us* by God. Interestingly, the passage states that we are *clearly seeing something invisible*. How can a thing be both clearly seen and invisible?

New Evidence

First of all, remember that the historical testimony of philosophical reasoning and scientific observation is that there is a "fuzzy" haze and overlap between categories. The boundaries are, if you will, *invisible*. But new evidence, flowing from research in the psychology of concept formation, is also showing a sense in which the invisible categories are *clearly seen*²

In this area of investigation psychologists begin by inventing an arbitrary category prototype. This prototype could be a schematic line drawing of a face, for example. Next, systematic transformations of the prototype are created to produce a set of stimulus figures that represent variations around the theme defined by the invented or created prototype.³ The variations cluster around the prototype in a manner analogous to the clustering of a set of numbers around the mean of the numbers. If schematic faces were being studied, for example, the placement of the eyes, mouth and nose might be varied in a systematic way around the average or prototype face. Reactions of subjects to these transformed stimuli and the prototype from which they were formed are then

studied in a variety of ways.

A consistent principle is that subjects are *not* exposed to the actual prototype until the final test phase of the experiment. In other words, the prototype is kept "invisible" until the final test. Incredibly, what these studies reveal is that, although the actual prototype is not encountered until the end, it is at all phases of the study *clearly seen*, even as are the transformations actually viewed. For example, if during a final test phase subjects are asked to view a set of variations which includes the actual prototype and report if they recognize any figures from the earlier phase of the experiment, among the highest recognition scores are those given to the prototype, even though, it, in fact, has not been previously viewed. Psychologists Bourne, Dominowski and Loftus conclude from these studies that ". . . items are represented in conceptual . . . memory not in terms of the specific properties of their exemplars but rather in terms of some schema, or underlying similarity dimension, which captures the gross characteristics of the set of exemplars."⁴ In other words, an *invisible* category, in the sense of having no distinct boundaries, could, nevertheless, be *clearly seen*.

Conclusion

The psychological study of concept formation reveals that human perception of basic categories is not based upon detection of distinct boundaries, but rather upon an intuitive sensing of central tendency and clustering. It thus becomes clear that the historical effort to establish the reality of basic categories by determining precise boundaries is irrelevant and misdirected. The witness of the most relevant area of scientific, psychological investigation corroborates Scripture and naive conviction to the effect that there are real and distinct identities and categories. God's created categories are clearly seen, not only through Scripture revelation, but in the creation as well. He has shown them to us, and they are manifest in us. Man is without excuse.

One last thought: One spiritual implication of the discoveries in the psychology of concept formation is that the faces of our friends and loved ones may not be the only familiar faces in eternity. The faces of Adam and Eve, or Noah — as genetic prototypes — may be distinctly and strangely familiar to us. And then, of course, there is *that face*.

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- 1 It is beyond the scope of this paper, but it should be pointed out that there is still no repentance. Instead, 20th-century man is turning increasingly to the ultimate delusion of shamanistic sorcery and occult mind power in an attempt to create whatever categories are desired.
- 2 L.E. Bourne, Jr., R.L. Dominowski and E.F. Loftus, *Cognitive Processes* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), pp. 197-205.
- 3 The accompanying bibliography contains a listing of research studies of the type discussed in this paper. These studies are summarized in Bourne, Dominowski and Loftus
- 4 Bourne, et al, op cit, p. 202.

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Counseling From the Biblical Creation Perspective: A Bibliographical Essay

Ellen Myers

There is today a burgeoning number of counseling services both by professing Christians and even more by non-Christians. In addition to counseling offered by people with professional credentials as psychologists, psychiatrists and pastors, much (perhaps most) counseling is being done informally by persons trying to help their friends or relatives. Finally, there is a veritable flood of self-help counseling manuals on the market both for troubled individuals and for would-be counselors. In the following paper we will review selected counseling manuals written from a professed Christian world view.

In attempting this task, it is indispensable that our evaluation itself be based upon firm scriptural truth. We begin, not with isolated parts of Scripture but with its beginning, the biblical creation record and the record of man's fall. The biblical creation record is our starting point because this record contains the first and foundational principles for biblically based counseling.

We read in the biblical creation record of the very first instance of counseling. For the very first counseling mentioned in the Bible is the grave counsel Adam receives about the consequences of eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Who gives this counsel? God Himself, the Creator of all things Who alone therefore knows all His handiwork completely. From the events that follow, namely, the fall, we know that God, the Creator of all things and of man in particular in His own image and likeness, gave man correct counseling. He gave His counsel in love to preserve man, not in arbitrary tyranny. For it follows of necessity from man's creation in God's own image and likeness that man *must* lose God's image and likeness if he disobeys God. Thus of necessity, if man wills that which God Himself does not will, he must die as that created being made in God's own image and likeness. We who are God's image-bearers are truly, by definition, dead as God's image-bearers when in trespasses and sins and rejecting restoration of ourselves as God's image-bearers in Christ. Our lives — our well-being — our identities — our "selves" — can thus of necessity exist only in Christ, Who is Himself the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15): "For by Him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and earth, visible and invisible . . . : all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17). Any human action and counseling infected with a view of "self" apart from God is false. This is why Christ Himself said, "I can of my own self do nothing, as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me" (John 5:30).

The sequel to God's counsel to Adam in Eden — our first parents' fall into sin — bears this out. Again counseling is involved — the counsel of the Serpent who advised Eve, "You shall not surely die: For God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5). We read that after eating of the forbidden fruit, that is, setting up themselves in rejection of God's counsel, the eyes of our first parents were indeed "opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7). What they first beheld was their own misery: they beheld their own "selves," apart from God, naked, in need of cover, no longer glorious and safe within their Creator's rest they had shared before losing their originally created likeness to Him. *Thus* they first "knew evil"; hence their fear upon hearing their Creator's voice, and their attempt to hide from Him behind fig leaves and trees.

We see from the biblical creation account and the biblical account of the fall how futile it is to look to one's "self" for independence apart from or over against the Creator. Any counsel, therefore, which in any way points to "self" primarily, or in addition to pointing to God Himself as the only source of life and health, is false.

Note also that God stripped Adam and Eve of their fig leaves and clothed them in coats of skins (Genesis 3:21), pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ His only begotten Son as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and indicating that we can stand before Him only clothed in His righteousness by His grace, and not in the filthy rags of our own "self"-righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). Furthermore, note that Eve could not excuse herself by laying the responsibility for her sin upon the serpent, nor could Adam shrug off responsibility for his own sin by blaming Eve (or ultimately God Himself). God punished each of them according to their own deeds, a principle running from Genesis through the last chapter of the Bible, where Christ says, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12). Hence any counsel implying or allowing blaming others for our own sins is false. Whatever parents, grandparents, spouses, employers, children and other fellow people may have done to hurt us, in the end "every man must bear his own burden" in the sight of God. We are to "forget the things that are past" and press on to perfection, looking only upon Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Keeping these basic biblical doctrines in heart and mind, we are now ready to evaluate a sampling of recent books on counseling by Christian authors. Let us begin with *Living Beyond Depression* by Matilda Nordtvedt (Bethany House Publishers, 6820 Auto Club Road, Minneapolis, MN 55438, 1978). This is a small paperback written by a pastor's wife who writes from personal experience of years of depression. She was brought to a discovery that changed her life through reading Hannah Whitall Smith's book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. This book (a Christian classic we highly recommend) points us to God in everything that happens, in fulfillment of Romans 8:28. "That night," writes Mrs. Nordtvedt, "this truth permeated the darkness of my tunnel . . . God showed me that if He is indeed in everything that comes to me, I should give thanks for it all, the hard things as well as the happy ones. Self-pity had been my constant companion . . . Should I not part company with self-pity and her cohorts — unbelief, pessimism, grumbling and fear? Should I not rather entertain gratitude, faith, hope and optimism?" (p. 13).

The remainder of the book gives practical examples and applications of this foundation truth of God in everything, including our troubles, for our good in His wise and all-provident love and perfect will. Over and over again the reader is reminded to look to the Lord and not to self, indeed, to forget about self altogether and to worship and praise Him, as we focus upon Him Who made heaven and earth (Psalm 115:12-15). "As I turned my eyes on Him, I too, escaped from the net of depression that Satan had laid for me. As I focused on Him I began to worship and praise. I was lifted out of myself and my circumstances. Joy and peace filled my heart" (116-117). There are many references to other Christian believers of past and present times who knew and witnessed of this God-centered, Christ-praising way, life and truth. There is *life* here to restore life.

This small book, written by one mercifully free from reliance upon or even reference to worldly professional counseling, but rather in simple and childlike faith sharing what she learned when personally sitting at the feet of our Savior, is altogether edifying and can be given to anyone in need of godly counsel.

Helping People Through Their Problems by Selwyn Hughes (Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN 55438, 1981, pb., 192 pp. incl. Index of Scriptures, Glossary and Index, \$4.95) is written for people called upon to help counsel other people on the levels of "counselling by encouragement" and "counselling by exhortation." A third level, "counseling by enlightenment" is according to Hughes, "too deep to be dealt with by untrained laymen and . . . must be referred to those who have the wisdom and insight to handle them." Hughes does not deal further with such "level three problems," referring them to a future book (p. 3).

Along with and in spite of frequent intrusion of language adopted from worldly professionals in the counseling field (and tinged with a trace of unscientific and uncritical Freudianism), Hughes offers much solid biblical advice. In particular, his formulation of the chief purpose of counseling is deserving of praise, namely, "to help (counselors) to become more like Jesus" (p. 19). He points out that "(i)f we understand the Scripture rightly, the goal of Christian living is not happiness, but holiness" (p. 20), and "the goal of helping people with their problems is to move them from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness" (p. 26). We can only applaud from the biblical creation perspective.

Hughes then lays out a pattern for people-to-people counseling which is generally sound. He gives useful specific guidelines, for instance, that a counselee ought to have a complete medical check-up before entering counseling (p. 34), rightly recognizing that what may seem like a "psychological" or "spiritual" problem may be a matter of physical ill health. He stresses use of the Bible as the fountainhead of true counseling and believes "the Bible, in its original form, to be divinely inspired and without error in all its parts" (p. 100). Appendix A, "Scripture for Use in Counseling," divided by headings like "anxiety and worry," "discipline through difficulties," "forgiving others," "loneliness," "temptation" and other important problem areas is most helpful. Hughes stresses the part of our thinking about or evaluation of our problems or experiences in the formation of our behavior, in accordance with the Scripture, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23.7). He emphasizes, in accordance with the biblical creation perspective, that "every single one of us

must accept accountability for our wrong actions" (p. 110). There is a good chapter about "Dangers to Avoid in People-Helping" which deserves attention from anyone engaged in counseling (all of us sooner or later).

The only thread of thought surfacing here and there as a minor theme throughout this book and troubling this reviewer is the idea that "we must learn to accept ourselves" because "God loves us." Now if we mean God's love offering us salvation in Christ, and if we mean our absolute worth by virtue of God's creative intent for us in His image and likeness, then there is scriptural truth to the statement that "God loves us." But "learning to accept ourselves" cannot mean minimizing our sinful nature after the fall and our many flaws and continuing, repeated acts of sin which we must repent of — that is, confess as sin and forsake by God's grace. We are to *mortify* our old man, not "learn to accept" him. The "self" we receive in Christ is in process of formation and restoration in our Creator's own glorious, sinless, perfect image and likeness; *to learn to accept ourselves as other than that new, Christ-restored self is sin.* The counsel to godly sorrow and repentance — to "sin no more lest a worse thing befall thee" (Christ's own words to the man healed at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:14) — is an indispensable part of the gospel, the good news of our Savior Who came to save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). This counsel is fearfully neglected today. We need to return to George MacDonald's high and holy concept of God's love: "God loves (men) so that He will burn them clean."

The Art of Learning to Love Yourself by Cecil G. Osborne (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1979, pb., 158 pp., \$2.95) is thoroughly marred by this same false emphasis upon the supposed "need for self-acceptance." This is evident from the book's title, from the very first counseling scene described in Chapter 1, where a woman describes a "primal experience" of rejection by her parents after the author "had regressed her to childhood" (p. 11), to ample blame heaped upon parents for causing a "weak self-image" in their children, to Appendix A on "Primal Feelings" (heavily Freudian and altogether irrelevant from the biblical creation perspective), Appendix B listing "Some Parental Put-downs" (laying more guilt upon parents), and Appendix C 'Test to Determine the Degree of Your Self-Acceptance' which might have been lifted from the pages of a gossip tabloid-cum pop psychology like the *National Enquirer*, and which even if answered 100% "correctly" would tell the test taker nothing about his or her acceptability in the sight of God — a Christian's first concern. 'nough said!

Dr. James Dobson's *Emotions: Can You Trust Them?* (Regal Books, A division of GL Publishers, Ventura, CA 93006, pb., 143 pp., \$2.50) is sound and biblical throughout. The emotions of guilt, romantic love, anger, and evaluation of "impressions" about God's will are discussed in a question-answer format. A section, "Learning-Discussion Ideas," is provided for review after each chapter. Dr. Dobson gives a good answer to counselors emphasizing "self-acceptance": "The absence of guilt feelings does not necessarily mean we are blameless before God... Regardless of what we feel, the ultimate test of one's acceptability to our Lord is found in Romans 8:1: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit'" (pp. 40-41).

Dr. Dobson believes that "we should take a long, hard look at the 'discovery

of personhood,' which seeks to free our emotions from restraint and inhibition. The pop-psych movement . . . encourages us to get in touch with our feelings . . . Reason is now *dominated* by feelings, rather than the reverse as God intended" (p. 10). The chapter on romantic love ought to be read by every young person entering the courtship age. This reviewer was particularly well impressed with the chapter on "impressions" or "feelings" about God's will or guidance in an individual's life. Dobson lists the following ways to test an impression's validity as an indicator of God's will: (1) Is it scriptural? (More than "proof-texts" — search the whole Bible.) (2) Is it right? (If an impression would result in the depreciation of human worth or the integrity of the family or related biblical Christian values, it must be viewed with suspicion.) (3) Is it providential? (Do circumstances permit the implementation of what I feel to be God's will?) (4) Is it reasonable? (Is it consistent with the character of God to require it? Will this act contribute to the Kingdom?) (p. 134).

Finally, Dr. Dobson counsels his readers to surrender themselves completely in the hands of God. He cites the example of a missionary who when a young man went to church and wrote down on a paper everything in his life he could think of as "surrendered to God," put the paper on the altar and waited for some sort of visible approval from the Lord; "but nothing happened. It was quiet, still and I was so disappointed. . . . Then . . . I felt the voice of God speaking in my heart. . . . It said, 'Son, you're going about it wrong . . . take a blank piece of paper and sign your name on the bottom of it, and let Me fill it in'" (pp. 136-7). Here is biblical counsel valid for all situations, truly coming from our Lord Himself.

Another practical counseling manual is *Telling Yourself the Truth* by William Bakus and Marie Chapian (Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN 55438, pb., 185 pp., \$4.95). The authors are practicing, professional counselors, and they call their method "misbelief therapy," claiming it is effective in 95 percent of cases they treated. "Misbeliefs," according to the authors, are beliefs we tell ourselves about ourselves and the situations we are in, which are not true and which lead us to attitudes and actions contrary to God's will. Misbeliefs "are the direct cause of emotional turmoil, maladaptive behavior and most so-called 'mental illness.' . . . the misbeliefs we tell ourselves are directly from the pit of hell" (pp. 17, 18). The counselor's job, then, is to make the counselee face his or her own misbeliefs and acknowledge them as lies; this accomplished, the counselee must be confronted with the truth and change his course of action and attitude accordingly. Case after case is described, in which readers with misbeliefs can recognize similarities to their own situations. The authors deserve highest credit for putting the part other people play in our problems in the proper, secondary place, and for emphasizing the accountability of each of us for our own actions. This also applies to the major cause of personal unhappiness, namely, what other people think of us. However, "Jesus never told us to go out and take a course in how to get people to like us. He told us to love *Him*, trust *Him*, have faith in *Him*, glorify *Him*, and to genuinely care about others" (p. 67).

On occasion there are passages or terms which appear questionable at first sight, but which are generally explained acceptably. For example, the term "self-control" is properly put in biblical, Christ-centered perspective by showing that it is really the Holy Spirit in us Who brings forth "self-control" as His fruit (p. 102). Another example is the authors' explanation of what they mean

by love for oneself: "A most godly thing for you to do is to have respect and love for yourself . . . In order to love yourself, you must be a lovely person; and that happens when a person allows himself to be crucified to sin (selfishness) and come alive to God through the power of the Holy Spirit" (p. 111). There is an excellent section on the manipulation of others by guilt, which should be replaced by speaking honestly and in true love to the people in our lives. There is an important discussion of "misbelief in being indispensable," a satanic lie which has harmed and even destroyed many ministries (usually first leading to pride, then to "burnout" and then to depression). When our Lord is using us, may we by His grace remember that then "(t)he Lord is demonstrating himself through (us) in the glory of love and truth. (We) are important, unique, special and beautiful, but thank God, none of us is indispensable" (p. 158). Our brother in Christ, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, put it like this in one of his poems:

. . . I, too, could transmit to mankind
a reflection of Your rays.
And as much as I must still reflect
You will give me.
But as much as I cannot take up
You will have already assigned to others.

This book is the application, in the counseling area, of exposing Satan's lying "mis-counsels" (beginning in Eden), and overcoming his lies with the truth in Christ and God's Word. It also contains an excellent definition of "happiness," so often a false, or falsely defined, goal of shallow and worldly counseling. The definition is taken from Psalm 1:1, 2 (Amplified Bible): "Blessed — happy, fortunate, prosperous and enviable — is the man who walks and lives not in the counsel of the ungodly. . . . But his delight and desire are in the law of the Lord, and on His law — the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God —" (Preface).

It is no coincidence that another counseling book, *Russian Letters of Direction 1834-1860* by Macarius, Starets of Optino (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 1975) is arranged by the Beatitudes, the "blessed's" of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. While the outward circumstances of the Russian people 150 years ago may have varied in some degree from ours, the problems with which they came to Macarius for counsel are much like our own: depression, perplexity about marriage, upbringing of children, choice of work, failure in career, poverty, illness — and how to deal with our own sins of hatred, pride, giving in to temptation, and so on. Over and over again Macarius takes care to point inquirers to God Himself and to the Scriptures, not merely by direct quotes but also by the whole spirit and expression permeating his letters. (One familiar with the Bible can indeed see many more quotations from it than indicated directly in italics by the editor.) As our modern counseling books do not, or not to this extent, this little humble volume shows forth what C.S. Lewis, in speaking of George MacDonald, has called "Christ-like union of tenderness and severity . . . terror and comfort . . . intertwined. The title 'Inexorable Love' . . . would serve for the whole collection." Macarius's following words apply to us today: "There is no occasion to think that God, although He has of course permitted your weaknesses, chose them for you or appointed them. On the contrary, He alone can help you to overcome them; He, who unfailingly helps the humble who repent and (have) grown acutely conscious of their sins" (p. 114).

The question whether any counseling at all is required for people with problems (especially emotional ones) is certainly relevant. In his classic, *Competent to Counsel*, Jay E. Adams cites the research by Dr. H.J. Eysenck which showed that while two out of three patients got better after 350 hours of psychoanalytic treatment, the same percentage got better without any treatment at all. It is certainly true that we should ultimately rely, not upon any counselor, no matter how sound, but upon our Lord Himself. Godly counselors know and state this truth, saying with the Apostle Paul: "Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith you stand" (II Corinthians 1:24). Yet at times we all look for a "helper of our joy" to help restore us; this is so from creation onwards, when God said it was not good for man to be alone and made Eve to be "help meet for him." But again, final accountability for our actions, even as Adam's for eating of the forbidden fruit, is not our "helper's" but our own, to God.

We have attempted to present a representative sample of professed Christian counseling manuals available today. To sum up, the root of all man's problems is his falling-away from God. Hence his "knowledge of evil," that is, of his misery as a naked, helpless and chaotic "self" no longer in his originally created image and likeness of God which alone can give him certainty, glory and joy. God's love for man consists precisely in patiently laboring to restore man to his originally created identity in God Himself in and by Christ. Satan's lies consist precisely in counseling man to set up on his own, either in "strong" outright rebellion, or in "weak" but no less rebellious claims of inability to obey his Creator's will. In both instances man clothes himself in the fig leaves of his own self-righteousness. The end of godly counseling from the biblical creation perspective is to point us to Christ, teaching us that without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), and that "we can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).



Creation Evidences from Animal Learning Research

Diane Powell

Locke chose a Latin phrase, *tabula rasa*, or "blank slate," to refer to the idea that anything could be learned. This phrase has since been used often by learning theorists. In recent years this concept has been embodied in a theory known as general process theory which has been the dominant point of view among learning theorists for the last sixty years or so. In essence, the theory states that any stimulus could be paired with any reinforcement and learning produced. If every organism were like a blank slate, coming into the world without any innate programming of its own, then we would expect that all learned associations would more or less be equally possible. Another part of the theory stated that learning would not occur if a delay between response and reinforcement lasted more than a few seconds.

Research along the lines of general process theory has been going on for over sixty years and has uncovered certain general laws of learning. For example, there is a similar learning gradient for a wide range of learning tasks, including such things as galvanic skin response (GSR) and salivation.¹ However, while general process theory has produced certain general laws about learning which hold true across systems and species, it has also provided an inaccurate view of the behavior of any particular species. It has done so by overgeneralizing and thus obscuring the unique nature of each created kind. This uniqueness is significant because it testifies to the greatness of the God who created all things and called each of them "good".

In order to meet the experimental demands of general process theory, B.F. Skinner designed an experimental "box" which was able to record an animal's responses to arbitrarily chosen stimuli. The box housed food and water containers, a light and a screen and was fitted with a lever which, when pressed, recorded the response. Although the incidence of the response was accurately recorded by this convenient procedure, other factors such as motivation were totally ignored. Through such gross oversimplification, learning theorists were totally ignoring the true nature of the animal's responses.

In one operant experiment cats were exposed to a puzzle box containing a pole.² When it was tilted in any direction, the doors opened allowing the cat to reach the food just outside. A Skinnerian type recording device would have recorded only that a response was made. However, this experiment involved a human observer who noted that the cats displayed certain stereotyped response patterns, moving the pole with a paw for a while and then using the shoulder or even the whole body.

The significance of these responses was not noticed for several years until Bruce Moore spotted it.³ He replicated the cat study done by Guthrie and Horton using either a human observer or a TV camera and was able to

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determine that the cats were responding only when a human observer was present. Furthermore, they were responding in a manner that was a typical social greeting. When Guthrie and Horton tried dogs in the same experiment, the dogs responded only by whining. The experimenters had ignored the possibility that the cat's responses were social and a feature unique to that organism.

Today, there is an increasing amount of evidence which challenges general process theory. There are more and more indications that, rather than being plastic and moldable, learning is itself shaped by an underlying structure which is unique to the organism and which determines the prospect of that learning task. Bolles discusses the term "preparedness" as an alternative to the concept that all responses are equally possible.⁴ Preparedness refers to capabilities which are innately programmed. These determine to a large extent what can be learned, and the ease with which it can be learned. Preparedness is assumed to be relative, identified by such terms as preparedness, unpreparedness, and contrapreparedness.

In avoidance conditioning the rat is prepared to learn to run down an alley for its escape, thus the learning of such a task proceeds rapidly. However, if the experiment requires something for which the animal is unprepared, such as running to the side of a shuttle box, the learning may require a long time if it is possible at all. In the case of contrapreparedness the task requires something that is contrary to what the animal is naturally prepared to do, something the animal finds it nearly impossible to learn. Although Bolles is still thinking in terms of a preparedness arrived at through evolutionary changes, the concept of preparedness is consistent with the concept of design implied by Creation.

John Garcia and his colleagues have seriously challenged both the notion that all associations are equally possible as well as the importance of there being no more than a very short delay between the response and the reinforcement. During experiments involving conditioning an avoidance to water, Garcia discovered that while rats could learn to associate lights and noise with foot shock, they could not associate lights and noise with nausea produced by radiation or toxin.⁵

Garcia designed a novel apparatus such that when the rat's tongue licked a water spout, a circuit was completed which delivered stimuli of flashing lights and noise. Garcia found that the rats could readily associate taste stimuli such as saccharin flavored water with nausea but were unable to associate such tastes with foot shock. This ability to make a quick association between taste and subsequent illness is so remarkable it has been labeled the "Garcia effect." This ease of association between a certain kind of causal agent with a certain class of effects indicates a preparedness. This principle of "belongingness" has been likened to such innate detection systems as the "bug detectors" of the frog⁶ and the "bat detectors" in the auditory system of the moth.⁷

In earlier learning experiments delays of 3 to 45 seconds have appeared to interfere with learning. However, Garcia has demonstrated a significant effect after delays of 75 minutes when rats were given a drug which produces gastric distress. This followed the ingestion of saccharin water.⁸ In another laboratory, Revusky produced aversion to sucrose when x-ray exposure had been delayed seven hours.⁹ Smith and Roll demonstrated similar effects for saccharin and radiation after a twelve hour delay.¹⁰ Conditioning success in spite of delay

indicates that general process theory is inadequate as an explanation of behavior. In addition to this, a creationist explanation would predict such a talent in an animal that functions as an opportunistic forager. The lowly rat is far more capable than learning theorists have given him credit for.

Another experiment indicates that rats are able to respond to subtle taste cues, another feature we would expect in an organism created to forage. Exposure to low dosages of radiation for eight hours in special radiation chambers was seen to cause a depression in food and water intake during exposure.¹¹ The following week the animals were returned to the radiation chambers and tested without exposure to radiation. The animals displayed the same depressed food and water intake. Later, informal testing revealed that the animals were responding to subtle taste cues which had been conditionally associated with radiation exposure. It seems that they were refusing water which had stood overnight in plastic test bottles such as were used in the radiation chambers. Later work confirmed that visual, auditory and tactile stimuli associated with the distinctive compartment were ineffective as conditioning variables.¹²

Another example of the rat's God-given talents is his sensitivity to a thiamine deficiency, which prompts him to sample new foods. It has been demonstrated that rats will learn an aversion to a familiar but deficient diet. Later, even when hungry and recovered from the effects of the former diet, they will prefer not to eat if the deficient food is all that is available.¹³ Rats also learned to prefer a flavor which was associated with recovery from a thiamine deficiency.¹⁴ Thus, they are prepared by design to avoid malnutrition.

In summary, the food behavior of the rat exhibits the features which we would expect of a creature designed to forage. The rat has an innate capacity to associate subtle food tastes with nausea even after long delays. Though such instinctive behaviors are predicted by the creation assumption they boldly contradict much of what learning theorists have believed for many years.

Such a preparedness can also be seen in the area of avoidance behavior. Bolles points out that natural avoidance behavior has little to do with avoidance as it is usually studied in the laboratory. For example, an escaping mouse has no chance to "learn" proper avoidance behavior. It must know what to do if it is to remain alive. Instead it is kept alive not by learning but by an innate defense reaction to new and sudden stimuli.

When laboratory rats are shocked, their friendly inquisitive natures are dramatically transformed into what resembles a wild rat, furtive and bent on escape. Exploratory, grooming or appetitive behaviors such as bar pressing all drop out. This sudden severe restriction of its activity to species specific defense responses is highly serviceable, as it promotes the animal's survival. However, it indicates that an organism's survival depends upon its own instinctive preparation and how well the animal conforms to it rather than on its own creative responses.

Bolles proposes that a response can be rapidly acquired only if it is a Species Specific Defense Response (SSDR). For example, if the innate fleeing response is effective in a particular experimental set-up it will be acquired rapidly. For example, running down an alley may require six trials to learn whereas jumping out of a box may require only a few trials, perhaps only one.¹⁵ These may both be considered examples of preparedness. On the other hand, learning the appropriate response in a shuttle box may require 100 trials if it is

learned at all.

Bolles also argues that a response can be rapidly acquired only by the suppression of other SSDR's. For example, other innate escape behavior such as freezing and aggression only result in more shock, thus they are suppressed. Running and jumping are acquired quickly only if they make flight possible. Thus, establishing an avoidance response depends upon how well the instinctive need for flight is being met, not on the response's physical features or even its effectiveness in avoiding shock.

Thus we see evidence for the innate structure of learning both in eating and in escape behavior. Survival may depend not so much on how clever the animal is, but on certain stereotypic inborn mechanisms designed to promote its survival and how well the animal heeds its natural instincts. Those who defend the notion "survival of the fittest" must give serious attention to this claim: The fittest animal is the one who is most true to the pattern of its created kind. Those animals who are "different" are not better equipped behaviorally or genetically.

Other investigations indicate that the preparation is a biological one. For example, aversions have been produced even while the animal was anesthetized.¹⁸¹⁷ Others also have stated that humoral changes must be responsible for the aversive properties of x-radiation.¹⁹ Other studies have shown taste aversion learning while the cortex was inactivated by cortical spreading depression.²⁰ Aversive effects can even be induced by transfusions of blood from irradiated donors.²⁰ Such evidence suggests strongly that the basis for innate learning mechanisms may very well be biological.

Such evidences of innate biological preparation for behavior point clearly to the concept of design. We may praise the Creator that even the lowly rat benefits uniquely from the loving design of its Maker. Such a humble example only bears further testimony to the wisdom and love of our Heavenly Father.

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